



Mindfulness and Mediation

By Gwen Jones

What is mindfulness and what does it have to do with mediation? The study of mindfulness can help mediators develop useful skills to handle the challenges of mediation. Mindfulness refers to a mental state, characterized by calm awareness of one's physical sensations, thoughts and feelings. The practice of mindfulness involves consciously doing one thing at a time, keeping the attention focused in the present moment. This requires doing things more slowly, more intentionally, with more awareness and respect. The purpose is to heighten awareness – awareness of self and awareness of others.

The practice of developing mindfulness is also called *vipassana*, and means “to see clearly” or “insight” in the Pali language. In vipassana teaching, an ancient meditation technique is used to help develop mindfulness. Although it was taught by Buddha, vipassana practice is not tied to any particular religious belief, and can be used by everyone.

The basic meditation technique used in mindfulness (vipassana) practice focuses on observing the breath. The technique is simple, and can be used successfully by people who have experienced difficulty in attempting to meditate using other methods. It is most often practiced while sitting. It can also be practiced while walking or eating, as long as the activity is done in a very slow and intentional way.

We observe the natural breath in order to concentrate the mind. With a sharpened awareness,

we naturally come to observe the changing nature of our bodies and minds. Using the breath as a focal point, we are able to become more aware of the changing stream of life. It may seem paradoxical, but as we learn to focus our attention on one thing, we actually increase our awareness of everything that is going on inside us and around us.

For mediators who are managing their own emotions while attending to several parties in the room, this is a very helpful skill. The ability to focus our attention helps us to manage distractions,

and to develop the skill of noticing when we are *not* mindful. Focusing our attention also helps us to stay in the present moment. This is important because parties can be stuck in the past, or anxious about the future. Mindfulness practice can help mediators to cultivate equanimity (calm, even-tempered

composure) and the ability to simultaneously acknowledge opposing views. This allows us to advocate for both sides, which may be a useful way to view mediator neutrality.

If you'd like to try the basic meditation technique, a simple introduction follows: To practice the sitting meditation, start by finding a position that allows you to remain alert with the spine straight but also relaxed rather than rigid. Close your eyes and relax your hands, allowing them to rest comfortably in your lap. Because we can easily become lost in thoughts, we focus our attention on the breath. Take a few deep breaths, and then allow



your breathing to become natural. Then, notice where in your body you most easily detect your breath. You might feel the movement of your chest, or the rising and falling of your abdomen. You might feel the touch of your breath around the nostrils, or on your upper lip as the air flows in and out. Bring your attention to the sensation of breathing in the area where you feel it most distinctly. As you are focusing on the breath, you will find that the mind naturally drifts off in thoughts. Thoughts are not to be avoided, and you do not need to clear your mind of thoughts. Rather you are developing the ability to recognize when thoughts are happening without getting distracted by the stories within the thoughts. So when you become aware of thinking, you simply acknowledge the thought without judgment and return your attention to your breathing.

As we practice mindfulness, we may become aware of many sensations, emotions and thoughts. According to vipassana teaching, it is not really necessary to analyze these thoughts and feelings in order to gain insight. But rather it is our willingness to become still and pay attention to our experience that allows us to develop insight and clarity in our lives.

If you'd like more information, we'll have an opportunity to explore the use of mindfulness for mediators at our In-Service Training scheduled for Tuesday September 22nd.



Enjoy
the summer
weather !!!



In-Service Training on Managing High Conflict People in Mediation

with Bill Eddy

July 29th 5:30—8:30 pm

Bellevue City Hall, Room 1E-112

5:30 potluck, 6:00-8:30 program



High conflict people appear to be increasing in society and in mediation. They often have intense negative emotions, make repeated personal attacks, trigger splits in neighborhoods and community organizations, and have little apparent interest in resolving the issues at hand. This seminar provides information about predictable patterns of five types of high conflict people with case examples. Ten Tips will be provided for mediators to use in managing their disputes, which are respect-

ful, calming of their negative emotions, and which focus on tasks and setting limits. An opportunity to discuss difficult cases will be provided.

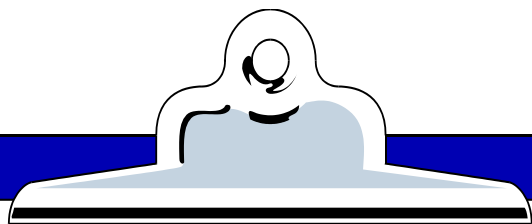
You will learn—

- To identify 5 common high conflict personality patterns.
- Ten tips for managing these personalities in mediation.

For more information or to RSVP, call 425-452-4091 or email: gjones@bellevuewa.gov

Bill Eddy is President of the High Conflict Institute based in Scottsdale, Arizona. Bill is a Certified Family Law Specialist in California with fifteen years of experience representing clients in family court, and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with twelve years of experience providing therapy to children, adults, couples, and families in psychiatric hospitals and out patient clinics. He is Senior Family Mediator at the National Conflict Resolution Center in San Diego, California.

He provides seminars on mental health issues for judges, attorneys, and mediators, and seminars on law and ethics for mental health professionals. He has taught Negotiation and Mediation at the University of San Diego School of Law. His articles have appeared in national law and counseling journals. He is the author of several books, including It's All Your Fault! 12 Tips for Handling People Who Blame Others for Everything, High Conflict People in Legal Disputes and SPLITTING: Protecting Yourself While Divorcing a Borderline or Narcissist.



Parent—Teen Update

By Andrew Kidde

The school year is over and things have quieted down in the parent-teen program. A few cases do come in during the summer so we appreciate those of you who can mediate this summer.



We had a lively and interesting last in-service on cultural issues between parents and children. It was a great turn out, and we came up with a great list of questions to ask families who are in culturally based disputes.

We are all wishing Cathy Goldman a speedy recovery from her bike accident. She is making great progress and expects to be available for some practice mediation sessions later this summer.

We also wish well to our departing seniors: Lian, Jesse, Katia, Jacob and Pete. Thank you for your contribution. Enjoy the sun, everyone !

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Neighborhood In-Service Trainings:

Managing High Conflict People in Mediation
with Bill Eddy, High Conflict Institute
Wed. July 29th, from 5:30-8:30 PM in Room 1E-112
5:30 potluck, 6:00-8:30 program

Mindfulness and Mediation
with Gwen Jones
Tues. Sept. 22nd, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-112

Training:

Conciliation Training Fall 2009
Dates: TBD

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Moved into observation phase:
Debra Pinckney

Moved into co-mediation phase:
Josh Sundt

Graduated from practicum:
Henry Smilowicz

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

Volunteer Profile:

Catherine Zimmerman



Originally from the east coast of Canada (Montreal), Catherine and her family moved to the Pacific Northwest 12 years ago and have lived in Bellevue for the past 8 years. Trained in both the conciliation and mediation programs, Catherine has been volunteering as a conciliator since July 2008 and will be joining the mediation practicum shortly. The skills required in conciliation and mediation are a great complement to my professional background in Human Resources. I've really enjoyed volunteering for the program and especially getting to work with the other volunteers who are so committed to making a difference in our community. For me, it's always a win/win -- I get to help individuals become more self-empowered and find ways to resolve their issues, and give back to the community at the same time!



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